

Notes on Chinese and Japanese Names

In this book Chinese and Japanese names are given in the traditional way, that is, with the family name first and the given name last. This is the way the Chinese and Japanese write their names.

MODERN ASIA AND AFRICA

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New York
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
London 1971 Toronto

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Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number: 73-146952
Printed in the United States of America

Preface

The readings in this volume range across nearly five centuries of time and several derive from the non-Muslim portions of Africa. Vast and obvious differences distinguished the African kingdoms of the Congo from the Asian civilizations of India, China, and Japan. Yet from the time when European seamen began to sail across the oceans, the diverse peoples of Asia and Africa did have a common problem: how to deal with the intrusive Europeans who had begun to link the coasts of all the continents of the earth together more intimately than ever before.

The readings have been arranged into four groups, to emphasize and illustrate a loose but real over-all pattern that governed Asian and African reactions to their common problem. At first, the European newcomers were usually received with lively curiosity. Local rulers were eager to avail themselves of advantages to be gained by using European tools and techniques. Guns had a special appeal, for obvious reasons. But curiosity extended also to the realms of styles and ideas, including religious ideas. Many Japanese and important African rulers became Christian, and even wore European clothes, at least occasionally. To be sure, Muslims reacted in a hostile fashion to the appearance of Europeans in the Indian Ocean, and most Chinese (though not all, as our selection from Hsü Kuang-ch'i shows) were too proud of their past and too disdainful of barbarians to exhibit much curiosity about the newcomers. But these attitudes were exceptional: in most lands, as long as the European ships did not seem to threaten anything held dear by the local inhabitants, the human impulse to explore novelty and play with unfamiliar objects and ideas predominated. Our first section illu

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trates accordingly how vigorously African and Japanese rulers and people reacted to the new things Europeans brought to their attention in the first days of ocean faring, and how even in sophisticated India and China the newcomers stirred up a ripple of interest in limited circles.

But the initial honeymoon did not last. In various and different ways, local peoples and rulers came to distrust, disregard, and sometimes to fear European influences. A kind of standoff resulted. Europeans continued to arrive by sea, but local peoples did all they could to minimize the impact of the strangers' continued, irritating presence. In the nineteenth century, however, European nations vastly enlarged their wealth and power as a result of the industrial and democratic revolutions. It followed that older methods of containment no longer sufficed. Asian and African peoples and rulers had to pay attention once more to the intrusive strangers—this time not in a spirit of lively curiosity, but as a matter of vital self-defense. The second section of the readings illustrates the different paths taken by Africans, Hindus, Chinese, and Japanese under these circumstances. In each case the upshot was a breakdown of older social and cultural patterns whether voluntarily—as in Japan and to some degree in India—or involuntarily—as in China and in African villages subjected to slave raids.

Part III presents another phase of adaptation to the confused and chaotic cultural scene that resulted from the breakdown of older traditions. Each of the writers represented here had become acquainted with the intellectual and literary traditions of Western culture and tried to reinterpret his own inheritance in the light of what he had learned from or about the West. A characteristic instability, uncertainty, and in some cases, a sense of ineffectiveness or personal isolation can be discerned in each of these writers.

The final section samples recent expressions of Asian and African efforts to overcome the uncertainty and ineffectiveness illustrated in Part III. Political independence was only part of what such men are striving for. A vibrant and reliable mingling of old and new, traditional and modern, Asian or African and Western cultural inheritances was what each in some sense de-

sired. But this was no less the desire of Europeans and Americans in the second half of the twentieth century, for our traditional culture has also broken down or come very close to doing so.

Yet Asian and African experiences of cultural breakdown have been more unambiguous and of longer duration than anything yet experienced in Europe and America. Hence their reactions to the anxieties and uncertainties of our time are more emphatic than any commonly met with among Westerners, or, rather, than are commonly met with among Westerners who hold positions of social leadership comparable to those these Asian and African spokesmen enjoy in their own lands. It is not, therefore, an accident that Maoism and the African ideal of Negritude appeal to revolutionary youth in the West. Asians and Africans have gone farther down the road of cultural alienation than most Westerners have done. Accordingly, their experience echoes loudest among those in Western societies who are most nearly in a similar position, that is, among revolutionary youth. The appeal of Western ideas and ideals to an earlier generation of Asian students and literary revolutionaries, illustrated in Part III, thus has its precise contemporary counterpart in the appeal of officially approved Asian and African ideas to disenchanted Westerners.

To allow the students to trace ebbs and flows of cultural interactions of this kind was the guiding purpose behind the preparation of this book. The editors owe special thanks to Professor Bentley Duncan of The University of Chicago for his translation of King Afonso's letter and for the notes which accompany that text, and to Professor Tang Tsou, also of The University of Chicago, for access to the texts relating to Maoism, and for advice about their meaning and significance.

Chicago, Illinois
February 1971

W. H. M.

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